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ABSTRACT

TESOL instruction has made some progress over traditional forms of education in meeting the needs of bilingual students. However, there is a danger that in the defense of orthodox concepts and methods, the actual needs of the students will not be met, and guidance from the new directions in linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and education will be overlooked. To strengthen TESOL programs, suggested improvements include: (1) increased emphasis on cultural sensitization so that the non-English speaking cultures are appreciated, while the American English of the target culture is learned; (2) more relevant ESL instruction at the adult level, making classroom work related to life goals and choices; and (3) reorganized ESL training in which the English class serves as support component supplemental to regular content teaching areas, rather than as an isolated part of the curriculum. A dominant language support program, used in conjunction with the English content and support classes, would provide a total bilingual support program. Thus, the training of TESOL teachers would center on educational methodology rather than linguistics and all teachers would be trained in applying second language teaching methods in regular content courses. (LG)

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TESOL TODAY: THE NEED FOR NEW DIRECTIONS

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TESOL today is a field in ferment, a profession in need of a new paradigm. Many of the ideas we have accepted virtually as dogma in the past are now being rejected or held in question, and many new ideas on the nature of language, on learning, and on the goals of teaching are appearing, but we lack a coherent new methodology to bring these ideas into practice, and to replace the old. I am deeply concerned about the effectiveness of TESOL instruction in meeting the needs of our students, and the state of our present training programs in preparing teachers to meet these needs.

I would like to address several of the weaknesses I think we have in TESOL programs as they are generally implemented today, and I would like to share with you some of the promising trends in our field that may be pointing the way for our future development, for our improvement in meeting students' needs.

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First is the need for cultural sensitization. One current trend in both theory and methodology is relating language use to its total cultural context. I predict this will be an increasingly central focus in materials at all levels, particularly as progress is made in research on the ethnography of speaking, as anthropologists call the field. Their techniques enable us to objectify information about all of the verbal and non-verbal routines, systems, and repertoires that are necessary for effective social communication.

Much less valid research is forthcoming in other areas, such as the different learning styles and value systems of various cultures, so here we must aim for sensitization to possible areas of differences and conflicts rather than specific information for the present. We must for the time being, in fact beware of those lists of cultural differences which have been published in the educational literature, but are dangerously stereotypic in nature.

Next is the trend toward more relevant ESL instruction at the adult level, where emphasis is being placed on job-related language. Too often in the past the ESL teacher has assumed that teaching English in a vacuum was his sole responsibility. Now it is becoming generally recognized that unless the content is relevant to the goals and life-choices of the students, the adult ESL program may be a disservice rather than an aid to them.

This implies that teachers of English to adults must either commit themselves to learning about the content areas, or else that the teaching were better done by people who are themselves specialists in the content rather than in language teaching.

In teaching English to foreign students at the university level, we have been recognizing that our instruction falls short of their need. We have been leaving them inadequately equipped with the skills they need for coping with university-level instruction in English. The need is for earlier and stronger emphasis on reading processes, and for teaching the more formal style required by textbooks and lectures rather than the conversational style of the Audio/Lingual materials.

The most far-reaching change is probably coming at the elementary and secondary levels with the recognition that language learning is most efficient

when it is highly motivated by communication needs, and when it is a medium for meaningful content. In other words, it is highly questionable how much learning is induced by the unmotivated pattern practice exercises which often form the core of ESL instruction.

Related to this is the recognition that although we have theoretically known that learning strategies and interests as well as intellectual factors differ basically for children as opposed to adults, most of the methods and materials we are now using in our elementary and secondary classrooms represent relatively minor adaptations from those designed initially for adults. We must now go even further, however, and question whether these methods were ever really the most effective for adults to begin with.

Research on second language learning suggests that it progresses in many ways like first language learning, with the learner moving through a series of approximate levels of mastery. It cannot be assumed that one structural form taught at one time will be acquired and used thereafter. Methods of teaching which require trial-and-error learning (as exemplified in the Audio/Lingual method) may be inappropriate for certain cultural groups--if not indeed for <u>all</u> cultural groups.

We already have had serious reason to question homogeneous grouping of students for special ESL instruction because of motivational considerations. But not only are they likely to become victims of the negative expectations which are generated by such practices, students will not learn the language in and of itself as well as if it were being used to teach a content subject. Furthermore, they will not have the advantage of English-speaking peers in the language learning classroom context to use as models or as targets for <u>real</u> communication.

Our main line of defense for such classes has been that our specialized Audio/Lingual techniques and materials will foster the most efficient second language learning. If this proves to have been a poorly founded assumption, we should indeed be ready and anxious to try new methods. The logical alternative is not to dump all of our non-English speaking students in regular classes to sink or swim with teachers who have no understanding of their unique language problems and needs. Students with limited competence in English need support instruction in the English language which is directly related to and integrated with the English content instruction.

One alternative I would suggest is adding an English support component to content classes in which there are a wide range of student language abilities, with not more than one third of the class limited-English speakers where possible. English support objectives would include:

1. Providing students with English labels and structures for the concepts they need to understand or wish to express.
2. Assuring that students can ask questions, and understand answers.
3. Providing students with positive support for the English that is being learned, without overcorrection of what has not yet been mastered.
4. Guiding and encouraging students in the consistent addition of new linguistic forms.
5. Assisting students in learning how to learn and succeed in English, including initial or transfer reading instruction and learning how to take tests (the relative importance of time over correctness in our culture, and the meaning of such specialized phrases as 'Mark the _____', or 'True or false').

These may be accomplished through a combination of educational strategies which are used in conjunction with English content instruction:

1. Informal and regular assistance from a content teacher who is additionally trained in second language methodology.
2. Individualized activities which are either programmed for self-correction or accompanied by a cassette recording (e.g., sentences to be completed with a key word after hearing or reading a brief passage).
3. Individual or small group tutorials with teacher, aide, or advanced student.
4. Assignments given to groups instead of individuals, with each group including students of varied competence in English.
5. 'Telephone tutorials': a phone number students can call after school or evenings to ask questions or for advice on 'how to say something' if they are preparing for the next class (including direct assistance with any homework that may have been assigned).
6. Cassette recordings of the written instructional material for students to listen to as they read along.
7. Cassette recordings and/or written summaries of concepts presented in a lesson with controlled English vocabulary and structures.

I believe such an English support program would be quite compatible with the English content component of a bilingual curriculum, but is perhaps most needed at the intermediate and secondary levels where 'keeping up' with subject content is critical on both academic and social dimensions.

I would also recommend that all students with limited competence in English get support instruction in their dominant language which is directly related to the content instruction they are receiving in English. This

includes students whose native language is spoken by too few in a district to make a full bilingual program feasible.

Dominant language support objectives would include:

1. Insuring that the content of classes being conducted in English has meaning for all students.
2. Increasing possibilities for student success in English content classes.
3. Increasing student attention and motivation by increasing his level of understanding and participation.

These may be accomplished through a combination of educational strategies which are used in conjunction with English content instruction and English support activities. Let me mention just a few possibilities:

1. Informal and regular assistance from a content teacher who is bilingual in English and the students' native language and can provide translation or explanation as necessary.
2. Individual or small group tutorials with a bilingual teacher, aide, or advanced student.
3. 'Telephone tutorials': a phone number students can call to ask questions about the content in their native language. (A teacher, aide, or other staff member who speaks Greek or Arabic, for instance, might thus provide tutorial assistance during specified hours for a few students who are rather widely dispersed in the district either by location or grade level.)
4. Cassette recordings of instructional content either translated or summarized in each student's native language. (For languages not spoken by any school staff member, these can be produced with the

assistance of an adult bilingual in the student's family or community, or with a professor or foreign student at a nearby college or university.)

5. For students who are literate in their native language, supplementary books or translations and summaries of the English texts.

I have been listing sample techniques just to illustrate the feasibility of such a bilingual support program, and to show that I am not suggesting radical changes from what well-integrated TESOL programs already do. I believe this suggestion follows naturally from the research which is showing us the need for heterogeneous classes and the need to teach a second language not by traditional foreign language methods, but by using it to teach something else. It also follows naturally from trends in other fields of 'special' education to provide for students with 'special' needs in integrated classrooms. There is a trend as well in many minority communities throughout the country to strongly oppose ESL pull-out classes for their children on constitutional grounds. I think they could succeed in proving we are not giving these students a maximal opportunity to learn, but I don't think we should wait for a court order to change.

Eliminating special ESL classes would not by any means eliminate the need for TESOL training (in fact, many more teachers with TESOL training and interest would be required), but it would indeed call for some major changes in our own preparation and in the materials we use. I think they would be very reasonable ones:

1. While linguistics would still be very relevant in our training, educational methodology (such as how to teach reading and how to individualize instruction) would be central.

2. We would have to have something to teach--a content area on the secondary level, competencies for a self-contained classroom on the elementary one.
3. We would need materials for individualized and small group instruction which were keyed to the content material of the standard curriculum and to our students' language abilities.

I have tried to cover a wide range of problems and trends in TESOL in this paper, and I hope my suggestions will stimulate questions and discussion in and out of TESOL. Let me summarize very briefly what I intended as the core of my message:

While we in TESOL have made some progress over traditional forms of education in meeting the needs of bilingual students, there is no reason for us to be complacent; we, too, need to improve. There is a danger, now that we are recognized and firmly established as a profession, that we will spend our time defending a set of orthodox concepts and methods (many developed in teaching abroad or to foreign students in American colleges), and will not direct our energies toward meeting the actual needs and learning styles of our students or responding to the new directions indicated by research and experience in linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and education.

We must learn to truely view our non-English speaking students positively, as already possessing skills in another language, as already well-along in their conceptual development, and we must in all cases use these resources as foundations upon which to build. The consequences of viewing and grouping students in terms of their relative 'deficiencies' in English, their verbal 'handicaps' which require remediation, often extend in Pygmalion-fashion to expectations of failure and the projection of low esteem.

Also, we must perceive language and education in their cultural perspective. Linguistic differences in students and in communities are symptomatic of the differences in the broad scope of culture of which language is only a part. We must be sensitive to these differences and learn to appreciate and respect their expression, while at the same time we teach students to understand the United States culture which is expressed by the American English they are learning to speak.

Furthermore, I have suggested that English taught as a goal in itself, isolated from the curriculum becomes an empty exercise which is devoid of meaning. Certainly at the elementary level, and perhaps at the secondary level as well, it would probably be best if we had no special ESL classes or teachers at all, but had all of our teachers trained in applying second language teaching methods in regular content-teaching areas.

To the extent we are willing to honestly assess both our progress and our weaknesses, willing to adapt, and willing to learn, TESOL can remain a vital force in the education of bilingual students. Unless we examine our methods and are prepared to change, we may well find TESOL an anachronism which, too, has failed.

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